

VILLAGE HYGIENE

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[369] This closer contact with the ideas and the services of the city is helping overcome one of the negative aspects of village life from the survival standpoint, namely, its lack of adequate hygienic provisions. When Greek villages are judged in terms of what one finds in many rural settlements throughout the United States and Western Europe, they measure up fairly well. They have their expected quota of flies, their problems of sewage disposal, and the difficulties of obtaining pure drinking water, but these concerns are common to farm people in other parts of the world.

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312 When, however, one measures the Greek village by scientific standards of public hygiene — and these should be the goal in the interest of better health for its people — then there are obvious shortcomings. According to *Medical and Sanitary Data on Greece*:

many of the rural sections depend on small springs and hand-dug wells for their water supplies. These are usually isolated from inhabited areas and the water is not piped to the villages. It is quite common to see women carrying water in earthenware containers from sources as far as a mile from their homes.

In semi-rural communities, particularly in the lowlands where underground water is more common, public wells, springs and private wells are often in use. Many private wells exist all over Greece and are sometimes the preferred sources of supply, even where safe piped supplies are provided. In some of the smaller Ionian and Aegean Islands and in a few villages in the northeastern Peloponnese and eastern Crete, the complete lack of any surface or underground water has compelled the population to depend on rain water collected from the roofs of their homes.

Many private and public wells and many rural springs are open and unprotected from contamination which may be introduced by the human or animal population which it serves. . . . Even after collection, the water is frequently subject to contamination in containers. . . .⁸

The urban water supplies are more apt to be adequate with proper precautions taken for filtration and chlorination.⁹

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514 A description of waste disposal is also contained in the report quoted above:

For the disposal of human excreta in the rural areas of Greece either the pit privy or bored-hole latrines are utilized. Defecation on the ground is still widely practiced due to lack of sanitary facilities in residences and schools. However, the sanitary type of bored-hole latrine and pit privy has been installed under various programs at low cost to villagers in rural areas mainly as demonstration projects.¹⁰

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165 In addition to the obvious visible signs of sanitation progress, one can learn much from the list of causes of death for Greece as a whole. Table 2 shows the first fifteen general causes of death for 1950. Some of the

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Where tuberculosis presents a dark picture, the reduction of malaria is a story of great progress. Prior to World War II, the annual rate of malaria among the civilian population was estimated at one million to two million cases, or from 15 to 30 percent of all of the people. The heaviest incidence came in the years of very heavy rainfall, sometimes reaching three million cases. One indication of the magnitude of the problem before 1946 was the annual expenditure by Greece of \$1 million just for quinine, found in almost all village stores. From 1946 to 1950, according to an official report, an average of 5,000 villages were residually treated with DDT and an average of 900,000 acres of potential breeding places such as lakes and swamp land were sprayed each year, the latter operation requiring an average of ten airplanes per season. Now the once-dreaded disease of malaria is no longer a major public-health problem in Greece, a result achieved at the equivalent sum of \$7.6 million during the 1946-51 period.

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Hygienic improvement depends just as much upon attitude change as it does upon the installation of proper facilities. And favorable attitudes are developing. Whenever the matter was brought up in discussion at the coffee-houses or elsewhere, the local village dignitaries would tell of the project they had formulated and submitted to the *nomos* (prefecture) authorities, in which they applied for funds to better their situation. In Arachova, on the way to Delphi, the project dealt with improving the water supply; the same held true for Vouno in the Arcadian part of the Peloponnesos, Karpensi in Eurytania, Konstantinia near Kavalla, Myrodation in Thrace, and on to a list of communities too lengthy to include. Other communities give priority to the construction of community latrines, school baths, or a general sanitation program.

THE VILLAGE HOUSE

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As a convenient starting point for typing the village houses, one can associate the stone house with the mountain village, the mud-walled house with the plains village, and the white, squarish house with the islands. Each is well adapted to the resources at hand, and each has its own historical development.¹¹ Many of the island homes with their thick walls took on a fortress character as a defense against pirates who, for many years, plagued this part of the world. Furthermore, the thick walls have been necessary in the mountain areas where the only possible defense lay in the hands of the villagers themselves. As already noted, down on the plain, particularly in Turkish times, the farms were for the most part estates of Turkish beys, and the villagers were little more than serfs dependent upon the bey for protection. He was not concerned about their shelter and they had less incentive to go to the trouble of building the more durable stone houses, even if there had been building stone at hand.

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